

a significant mess and waste of food product. Additionally, the use of a knife to spread frosting may be dangerous for a young child since the child could be injured by the knife. Further, most children do not possess the strength or coordination to use the decorating devices described previously.

A cookie painting kit is presently available in which users are instructed to paint cookies with brushes such as may be used with water colors. These kits typically offer a single bristle brush and several small jars of paint. Significant problems exist with this type of cookie painting system. First, the brushes offered in these kits tend to drip and create messes. Second, it is difficult for children to control the amount of paint which is retained on the brush after dipping into the paint and hence the amount of paint which is deposited onto the object intended to be painted. Third, the very nature of several open bottles of paint invites spills and stains not only on the child's clothing and skin but also on counters, floors and carpets. Additionally, open bottles of paint are subject to significant evaporation and even possible contamination from foreign objects and fingers. Lastly, anyone who has watched a child use watercolors has seen the all too common, ultimate result as the child transfers the brush from one color of paint to another, thereby eventually combining all the colors together. The usual outcome of this process is that all the paint bottles will now contain a more or less useless, brown paint, as they have become cross-contaminated. Generally at this point it is necessary to discard the bottles of paint and decoration is no longer possible.

Recently, some additional attempts have been made to provide for a means of decoration of food products in which the foods to be decorated are restricted to those having hard, dry surfaces. These products do not anticipate, nor are they designed to function on extremely soft substrates such as fresh frosting. The products are essentially identical and as such, suffer from the same shortcomings. The products are nothing more than standard, felt tipped markers in which the ink has been replaced with liquid food coloring. Because these markers use hard nibs, similar to those used to write on paper, cardboard and other dry, hard surfaces, they are entirely unsuitable for writing on frosted or other soft food items. Indeed, their performance even on many dry foods is poor, owing to the fact that these relatively inflexible nibs do not readily make intimate contact with the often uneven surface of the food item. Nearly all "felt" tipped markers produced today including the aforementioned products employ nibs which are made from fibers which are bonded either in a random fashion, such as felted polyester or wool or alternately, fibers which are essentially parallel to each other and which are bonded together using a chemical binder or adhesive. Typically, polyester, nylon or acrylic fibers are bound together to produce nibs for these conventional felt pens. The nibs may be produced by die cutting the nib stock into the desired shape which is typically used for 2-dimensional nibs such as those used for broad line markers, or alternately, the nib may be ground from rod stock. Many fine line markers employ nylon or polyester nibs which have been ground to a bullet shape, wedge or similar desirable shape. These markers have been optimized to write on hard, dry surfaces. Indeed, some of the nibs

used in these pens are so compacted and hard that they are capable of piercing the skin and causing injury. Most importantly, however, markers using nibs of this type are incapable of satisfactorily writing on soft surfaces such as wet or moist frosting. Furthermore, as the moisture content present on the surface of the food item to be decorated is increased, markers of the conventional type become less effective as they are incapable of providing sufficient fluid flow to the surfaces.

Additionally, the relatively rigid nature of the nibs used in conventional markers such as those used in the specific products cited above, can cause great damage to soft surfaces such as frostings used to frost cookies and cakes, since the nib gouges the frosting during the attempted writing process. Still further, this gouging action tends to deposit significant quantities of frosting on the surface of the nib. These depositions quickly fill active fluid transfer sites on the surface of the nib and soon the nib is useless as a fluid transfer element.

While some attempt has been made to satisfy the need for a system which may be used to more easily decorate cookies, none of the available means offer the inherent simplicity, convenience, performance and ease of use as that of the instant invention. Clearly, the act of decorating cookies with frosting can be a trying experience for both child and adult. Since one of the purposes of the cookie (or cake) decorating experience is to have fun and create happy memories, something is missing from presently available food decorating means.